

# Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks:

## Cumberland Trail State Park's Black Mountain Loop Trail

By Fran Wallas

**B**luffs, boulders, and beautiful views are among the features you will encounter on a hike on Black Mountain's Loop Trail in the Cumberland Trail State Park.

In the spring, you have wildflowers. In the winter, you have views. Black Mountain has wonderful vistas of Grassy Cove and Sequatchie Valley. On good days you can see Watts Bar and the Smokies.

Start your hike on the paved trail at the end of the parking lot and cross the road. When you turn on a gravel road, there are white blazes and a small sign that says "Main Trail."

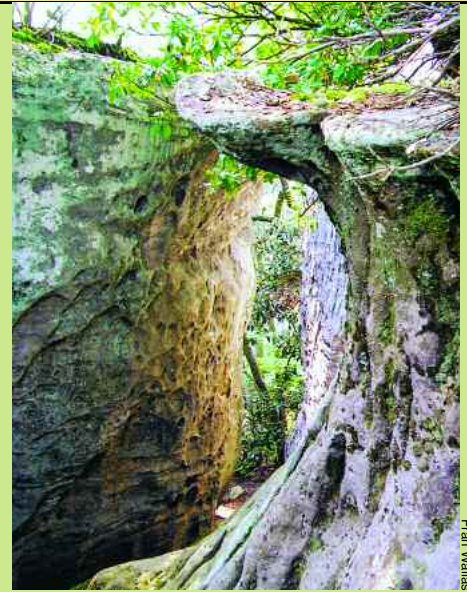
Along the trail on your right is a chimney that was part of the Gill family house built around 1900. In front, you will see the springhouse. If you are going to camp, this is where you have to filter your water since there is no water at the backcountry campsite. The trail continues to the right up the steps to a kiosk with maps and information about the 1.7-mile easy loop trail and the Grassy Cove segment of the Cumberland Trail.

In two-tenths of a mile when you get to the overlook sign, go left. There is a wooden bridge to the Southern Overlook with access to the area below the bridge. Here is the best place to enjoy above and below the bluff views of Little Cove and Grassy Cove.

When you are ready to continue the hike, backtrack to the sign for the main trail and turn left. Follow the white blazes to the next junction. The main trail goes left and the loop trail goes right. (If you are hiking towards the tower, you have taken the wrong right.) Even if you only want to hike the loop trail, take a short detour and continue a little further on the main trail. The trail goes down steep steps through a crack in the rock. At the bottom is a tumble of unusual rock formations and a place that is fun to explore. A little further is the backcountry campsite for those who want to make this hike into a short backpacking trip. You will need to get a camping permit before your trip from the Cumberland Trail State Park Office or the Cumberland Trail Conference. You can register online or by telephone.

Re-climb the steps of the main trail back to the loop trail junction and follow the blazes four-tenths of a mile to another short side trail to the Northern Overlook. Continue following the loop trail. There are views off to your left along this section of the trail.

When you cross the paved road, go up four steps and take the trail on your right. The trail climbs steeply. In a short distance you will see your car peeking through the trees, and soon recognize that you are back near the springhouse. The trail to the parking lot



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**A narrow passage beside the first overlook at Black Mountain. Below: Gary Ruetenik of Crossville gets a great view on his hike at Black Mountain.**

is the same trail as the one you took at the beginning of your hike.

For those who want a longer hike, you can combine this hike with the Brady Mountain Section of the Cumberland Trail.

### Directions

The first adventure is finding the trailhead. Take Highway 40 Crab Orchard exit 329. Get off of the ramp on Battown Road. There is no sign identifying the road. Go south away from Crab Orchard. Very soon the road seems to dead end, but you turn right. Continue on the main road about 1.5 miles until you get to an intersection that looks like a turkey foot. Make a left turn here on Owl Roost Road and follow the narrow road to the large trailhead parking lot on the right. Drive slowly and don't give up.

#### Cumberland Trail State Park



(Fran Wallas is an avid hiker. She works as an attorney with the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation in Nashville. You can read about her other Great Hikes in Tennessee State Parks in [www.tn.gov/environment/greathikes/](http://www.tn.gov/environment/greathikes/).)



Jim McCullough